



# GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

## GBC's 2020 Baltimore City Election Coverage Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

### **CANDIDATE: MARY WASHINGTON (D)**

The Greater Baltimore Committee has identified key policy priorities to drive discussion in the 2020 Citywide Elections. The priorities are:

1. Prioritize enhanced coordination across criminal justice agencies and support evidence-based crime reduction strategies to improve public safety.
2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.
3. Exert solid, steady leadership to stabilize Baltimore City government and create a culture of integrity, transparency, and efficiency.
4. Support education and workforce development programs that prepare Baltimore residents for family-supporting jobs in high-growth industries and create programs or initiatives to attract talent to Baltimore City.
5. Utilize policy, funding, and intergovernmental coordination strategies to enhance Baltimore City's transportation and mobility infrastructure and operations.

*Disclaimer: As a 501(c)4 organization, the Greater Baltimore Committee does not endorse candidates for public office. The information contained on this page and all engagement activities surrounding the election are for educational purposes only.*

1. Prioritize enhanced coordination across criminal justice agencies and support evidence-based crime reduction strategies to improve public safety.
  - What are three actions that you would take in your first year to improve public safety?

*1) A top priority in improving public safety must be the full funding and implementation of proven violence prevention, intervention, and diversion programs in communities disproportionately impacted by violence. We will add \$20 million per year to expand and strengthen programs like Safe Streets which utilize strategies that have been successful in some Baltimore communities and in other cities like New York, Boston, and New Orleans. By addressing violence as the public health issue that it is, we can more effectively employ strategies that connect individuals to resources that address risk factors often linked to violence, such as trauma, substance abuse, education, housing, and employment.*

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2) *Focus on high-crime areas: We will work closely with the Police Commissioner to identify hot-spots with the most gun violence to effectively coordinate response efforts by the police department, crime reduction programs, and community organizations. A targeted and data-driven approach focuses resources where they are most needed to quickly identify violent offenders and provide an immediate reduction in crime while also providing communities with resources to ensure these reductions are sustained over time. This includes partnerships and coordination between city agencies, organizations, and private entities to provide needed health, workforce development, employment, and education services directly in these neighborhoods.*

3) *Right-size the BPD and use technology to improve police effectiveness: Baltimore City's shortfall of police officers makes it difficult for them to do their jobs safely and effectively, causing the city to waste millions of tax dollars in paying overtime to the overburdened officers. I'll work with BPD to ensure they have the resources they need to process applications, conduct effective trainings, and eliminate unfair barriers so that we can strengthen recruitment and staff the department correctly. We also have to modernize the BPD's crime-fighting techniques and implement new technologies to make police responses to violence more effective. By providing officers with the needed technology, we can increase their efficiency in the submission of reports and reduce wasteful spending. This will also assist with the investigation of the city's backlog of unsolved murder, burglary, and assault cases in order to make arrests.*

- **As Mayor, what steps would you take to improve coordination across federal, state, and local criminal justice agencies and with the Judiciary?**

*We certainly need to take new steps to see to it that our various law enforcement and criminal justice are working together to advance public safety. Since Governor Hogan's administration defunded the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council in 2017, and under the administrations of the last two mayors, that kind of cooperation has been sorely lacking. My leadership strategy has always been to bring stakeholders together to find common ground and cooperate, and I will bring that approach to criminal justice. As a first step, I will strengthen the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and work hard to make sure it more effectively communicates and coordinates with all of these agencies.*

*Central to this effort will be strong support for the Baltimore State's Attorney's Office, and an effort to make sure that other stakeholders fully support its work. To focus our efforts on violent repeat offenders, we will provide the Baltimore State's Attorney's Office the necessary resources to retain highly talented prosecutors with competitive salaries, invest in better technology, and develop programs with other city agencies that intervene with youth exposed to violence and trauma. When we prosecute defendants, we need to do so with the highest standards, so that convictions are just and that they stick. We also need to make sure there is effective coordination and communication between the Baltimore Police Department, the State's Attorney's Office, and other law enforcement agencies. To dramatically improve the transparency of this work, my administration will post CrimeSTAT data online and host regular public review of the data.*

*We will also re-implement a Homicide Review Board to review each murder and explore what could have been done by each agency to prevent it. That strategy has been very effective in Baltimore in the past and has helped other cities sharply reduce gun deaths by continuously updating strategies and coordination between agencies to reach individuals at highest risk and prevent future violence.*

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- What are your plans to address “squeegee kids” and panhandlers in City intersections?

*We must ensure that our streets, intersections and highway ramps are safe and free from unlawful activity and obstructions. My administration will increase outreach and engagement to identify the needed resources and connect these individuals to economic and educational opportunities. We know that the people who are at these intersections are out there for many reasons, including the need to support themselves and their families. To address this, we have to work with them to remove barriers that limit their employment eligibility, such as criminal records, educational limitations, social-economic limitation, and lack of support to navigate the application process. We need to look at ways to address these issues and re-engage them in educational and employment opportunities through relevant programming, outreach, and support. For the young people interested in employment, my administration will work with Youth Works, job training programs, and local small businesses and entrepreneurs to provide healthy and positive job opportunities to these young people. For individuals facing homelessness, we must ensure that our homeless outreach efforts can provide resources in a timely way, getting people housed and connected to services. By involving local social work schools and other anchor institutions, we can increase the capacity of existing organizations to provide the wraparound services that are needed.*

### 2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.

- What strategies or programs would you put into place to encourage businesses and residents to move to Baltimore City?

*Encouraging businesses and residents to move to Baltimore involves making Baltimore a more livable, workable and safer place. It means making sure our services are reliable and consistent. It means making sure our government is trustworthy and transparent.*

*Research regularly suggests that the best way for a city to build a thriving business climate is to make sure it has strong schools, effective transportation, safe communities, efficient basic business infrastructure, and trustworthy public governance. My core commitments to sharply expanding support for our city schools, boosting investment in our roads and streetscapes and other key infrastructure, and bringing government with true integrity and transparency to the city will move the city strongly in that direction and lay the groundwork for a city that is more welcoming to new business and new residents alike.*

*To build a safer and better-educated city, we will, in my first year as mayor, boost the city's contribution to our schools by at least \$20 million and add \$10 million in funding for violence prevention, intervention, and diversion programs, such as Safe Streets, to immediately scale up those programs to begin driving down the violence on our streets. We will also act to improve mass transit, speed up bus transit in order to help more city residents get access to job centers and reduce traffic congestion. We will review our systems to reduce bureaucracy for businesses, including the permitting and licensing processes. We will improve trash and clean-up efforts and work to make our city cleaner and greener and more attractive for existing residents and for newcomers.*

*To enable more of our residents to invest in building their lives in the city -- and bring new residents to the city -- we will expand incentives for homeownership such as downpayment and closing costs assistance. To expand our small business community, we will offer additional support to business*

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*incubators and to new small businesses, especially ones that are minority-, women- or employee-owned. There is already a wealth of creativity, passion, and dedication within Baltimore and we need a city government that uplifts that and ensures that both existing and new residents and businesses are supported in having Baltimore be their home.*

- What strategies or programs would you put into place to encourage existing businesses and residents to stay and expand in Baltimore City?

*The steps we need to take to retain businesses and residents are much like those we need to take to attract new ones -- make our schools work better, make our streets safer, make our communities more attractive places to live, make our transit system efficient and accessible, and make homeownership more affordable for city residents. We all know that concerns about safety and school quality prompt many young families to leave the city. I will move immediately to expand city support for the schools, expand community schools and invest in improving our recreation centers, expanding youth programming and taking other steps to make the city more friendly to children and families.*

*As I noted above, I will immediately expand proven violence prevention, intervention, and diversion programs and implement our wide-ranging public safety strategy to build a safer and healthier Baltimore. This issue is complex and requires an interagency approach that increases coordination, uses public health strategies to ensure positive long-term outcomes, and is reflective of best practices.*

*We have a vibrant start-up and incubator community in the city, but we do little to encourage those businesses to stay in Baltimore once they become established and grow. We can increase the number of start-ups that call Baltimore home and also create incentives for them to stay.*

*We also have to develop new strategies for assisting existing residents in becoming homeowners, which means providing more resources for navigating the homebuying process, additional assistance for new homeowners to invest in the city and work to ease the high property tax rates that make city homeownership very expensive. I will also work with local businesses and schools to provide incentives for employees to become homeowners so that we can retain talented and committed residents.*

- Do you have ideas or suggestions to reform the property tax structure in the City?

*With many thousands of vacant properties across the city limiting our tax base, we need to impose an additional tax on properties left vacant and in decay (as Washington, DC and other cities do) to bring in additional revenue to help meet the costs that kind of blight imposes on the city. We also need to take new steps to either move some of the city's thousands of vacant houses back on the market and enable either their rehabilitation or the redevelopment of those properties. This will make them assets both to our communities and to our tax base again.*

- What are your top three priorities or programs to grow Baltimore's tax base?

*1) My first priority is to increase jobs for our citizens. We need more jobs that pay living wages in the city and since our tax system is personal income-driven, an expansion of more jobs with better pay will increase our revenue.*

*2) We need to use tax incentives and public resources in ways that make housing and development work for many more of us. For example, we can create a long-term tax credit for individuals who buy*

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*and completely renovate a vacant house or apartment building. This credit can then transition into a perpetual lower tax rate. If this program was instituted robustly, it would allow us to reduce property taxes across the board.*

*3) As I stated above, imposing an additional tax on vacant properties will also increase our tax revenue.*

3. Exert solid, steady leadership to stabilize Baltimore City government and create a culture of integrity, transparency, and efficiency.

- Baltimore City is at a crossroads and in need of strong, ethical leadership. Why are you the best candidate to lead the City into a new decade and chapter?

*Baltimore needs innovative leadership of unquestioned integrity and transparency to restore faith in our ability to address our city's problems. These values of accountability and transparency have always been central to my work -- and are core commitments of my campaign.*

*I have proposed a series of reforms to make sure city government meets the high ethical standards the public expects and deserves. I have called for establishing a non-partisan city Department of Legislative Services, an Ethics Commission to make sure city officials, elected and appointed, live up to the highest standards, and an Office of Government Accountability to oversee public spending and make sure our money is used to meet critical public needs. I will conduct annual audits of all departments, which will include a focus on overtime spending to make sure we're using our dollars effectively. I will also establish an annual public health census to let the public know where the city stands on violence, addiction and other critical public health issues and whether we're using our city's world-leading public health resources effectively to meet those challenges.*

*My long record of leadership of public agencies, nonprofit organizations and community groups shows I know how to make such groups work to serve the public interest -- and is unblemished by any charges of impropriety. I developed real performance management and accountability solutions as the founding Director of the HousingStat program for the city housing department. I found innovative ways to create a cleaner, greener city and find green jobs for city youth as associate director of the Parks and People Foundation. As a 9-year veteran of the Maryland General Assembly, I've learned how to work with leaders across the state to make reforms to help our city, protect vulnerable residents, and make government work effectively for all of us. For example, I've passed important reforms for SDAT to make it more accountable and timely on the matter of tax appeals. Serving on the House Ways and Means Committee and the Appropriations Committee has given me a deeply detailed understanding of the state budget -- and of how to make it work for our city.*

- What are three actions that you would take to improve transparency and efficiency in City government?

*1) I will create a non-partisan Department of Legislative Services to make sure city officials and city council members have clear, nonpartisan analysis of legal reforms and budget choices before the city.*

*2) I will establish an Office of Government Accountability to review all city contracts and review our contracting procedures to make sure our money goes to meet our needs and our contracting meets the highest standards of transparency.*

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3) *I will conduct an annual public health census to assess gun violence, addiction, drug overdose, violence-related trauma and other critical public health concerns and to measure our progress in using our city's public health resources to address those challenges.*

- Several charter amendments have been proposed and are pending legislative review and approval.
  - What is your position on the composition and function of the Board of Estimates?

*I will work to revise the City Charter so that the Mayor no longer appoints members of the BOE. Officials appointed by the mayor do not belong on the BOE and including them, as we do today, makes that body effectively a rubber stamp for the mayor's agenda rather than an independent watchdog over our public spending. We need to amend the City Charter to change that situation. I will also modernize the way the BOE functions and shares information with the public.*

- Do you think that the Baltimore City Charter should require a Chief Administrative Officer? Please explain your answer.

*While I do not support amending the City Charter for this purpose, I do believe proponents are approaching the recommendation from a good place. I do agree with the necessity for a highly qualified, experienced, responsible public administrator who reports to the Mayor, but who oversees departments of government outside of the Executive Office of the Mayor. In my view, an unelected CAO isn't a catalyst for the political culture change that is needed in Baltimore City; your elected executive--the Mayor--is. There is a county in Maryland that has a CAO and still has deep-seated corruption and mismanagement. On the other hand, there are counties that have a stable and well-run government, not because of their CAOs but because they have a strong culture of civic engagement and checks and balances which, among other things, makes them attractive to quality CAOs and allows them to be effective.*

*I believe the buck stops with the mayor and that appointing a charter-imposed CAO or a city manager would tend to diffuse that responsibility. There are more transparent, democratic and accountable ways to ensure that Baltimore is a well-run city.*

- How would you structure your Administration (ie, CAO, Deputy Mayors, Chief of Staff, etc.) to provide the most efficient delivery of City services?

*As mayor, I will be looking to strengthen the management of City agencies and fiscal accountability. There will be a Chief of Staff (CoS) who will oversee the Executive Office of the Mayor, handling scheduling, communications, intergovernmental affairs, constituent services and have oversight of all personnel in the agencies of government. There will a Deputy Mayor of Administration, a highly qualified, experienced, responsible public administrator who reports to the Mayor, but who oversees the day-to-day operations of city services and fiscal matters. It will be absolutely critical that there be synergy and no friction between the CoS and the DMA. I will also hold full cabinet meetings monthly during the first year of my term, bimonthly the 2nd year and at least quarterly for the balance of the terms to ensure our agencies are working together to address the city's services.*

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*Currently, our city operates in silos. The best way to provide efficient delivery of city services is to ensure that city agencies are working collaboratively to solve issues. I would reintegrate the monthly CitiStat process, the performance management and accountability program for Baltimore City. I know first-hand the potential for transformational nature of this tool because I was the founding director of HousingStat. Additionally, there must be data sharing and planning among agencies. For example, the Department of Housing and Community Development can work collaboratively with the Police Department to prioritize code enforcement and stabilization of vacant properties in drug activity hotspots.*

4. Support education and workforce development programs that prepare Baltimore residents for family-supporting jobs in high-growth industries and create programs or initiatives to attract talent to Baltimore City.
  - Under the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission, Baltimore City stands to receive an additional \$500 million annually in State education aid by Fiscal 2030. In order to receive this additional funding, Baltimore City must increase its investment as well, by \$330 million annually by Fiscal 2030. According to Maryland Department of Legislative Services figures, Baltimore City currently spends less than 15% of its budget on education compared to a statewide average of 36%. What is your plan to meet the increased obligation of Baltimore City? Please be specific in identifying areas or agencies that will see reduced appropriations as well as revenues that may be increased.

*By increasing the property taxes on vacant houses, we will see increased revenue, either from that tax directly, or by the investment property owners make to avoid the tax. We can do this by trimming unnecessary spending and by working to raise more revenue from some sources that aren't contributing fully to our city's revenues. We need to work with these anchor institutions to address this issue as numerous other cities have. This additional revenue would allow us to make the necessary investment in our education system, especially as we work to implement the Kirwan Commission's recommendations, which in turn will increase the ability of our local non-profit institutions to attract and retain talented employees. Future TIFs will require revenue sharing so that Baltimore can realize the benefits of the development alongside other investors.*

*At the same time, we will incrementally reduce the budget of the Baltimore Police Department as we shift our priorities to funding schools and communities. We will conduct an annual audit of police overtime spending to make sure we're spending our public safety dollars wisely. We will also utilize audits of every agency to determine where efficiencies can be found and eliminate duplicate functions. Also, by investing in the community school model city-wide we can utilize our resources collaboratively with city schools so they can use their funding on instruction.*

- Currently, 0.2% of the City's budget is dedicated to workforce development. What is your position for funding workforce training and adult education programs to reduce unemployment and adequately prepare City residents for jobs in high-demand industries?

*We certainly need to invest more fully in workforce development programs and adult education. For years I have been a leader in supporting and funding the community schools model, and now I want to*

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*take this model a step further by turning many of our neighborhood schools into community centers where city residents can access adult education, ESL, GED classes and other training programs right in their own neighborhoods. We will also invest more fully in apprenticeship programs that help young adults learn in-demand skills like plumbing, carpentry, electrical, and other emerging high demand skills that can help young adults who did not or will not attend college build stable careers with livable wages. This plan would include the direct involvement from local businesses, especially small locally-owned enterprises that already have an incredible impact on communities because they hire locally and invest back in their own neighborhoods.*

- What role should the City play in attracting and retaining top talent to fill in-demand jobs in high-growth industry sectors?

*The city's role is to build a thriving economy and a city with the kind of cultural and commercial amenities, public safety, and quality of life that will make Baltimore an attractive destination. Indeed, for all our well-known problems, Baltimore is already a leading destination city for young adults graduating from college. When we make Baltimore a safer, smarter city, growing industries will easily be able to bring new talent to Baltimore.*

### 5. Utilize policy, funding, and intergovernmental coordination strategies to enhance Baltimore City's transportation and mobility infrastructure and operations.

- What are three things you would do to improve transportation and mobility in the City?

*1) Speed up bus travel: We need to add 15 miles of dedicated bus rapid transit lanes to the city's bus network. About 30% of city residents do not have access to a car of their own. The slowness and limited reliability of the city's bus network today often makes it difficult and time-consuming for residents to access job and economic centers and arrive at work and school on time consistently. Adding dedicated bus lanes, with signal priority where possible, would expedite the movement of buses throughout the city, cut commute times, and make local bus transit reliable. We will also study converting a major east-west artery to a bus and transit-only transitway to speed crosstown commuting.*

*2) Invest in modern, complete streetscapes: For too long the city has under-invested in our roads and streetscapes, which have deteriorated and are now in urgent need of repair. We need to make a major investment that makes our streets more welcoming to transit riders, cyclists, pedestrians, scooter-riders and users of other innovative transportation forms. By encouraging forms of transportation other than the automobile, we can diminish congestion and pollution and improve mobility of residents across the entire city. These improvements should build upon existing updates being made through the 2018 Complete Streets Ordinance and expand these developments to more neighborhoods and high volume transit corridors.*

*3) Change parking policies to encourage transit use and diminish congestion: Offer tax credits to downtown employers to encourage them to offer transit passes to their employees instead of free parking. Encouraging employers to subsidize transit rather than parking will mean fewer cars and fewer drivers seeking parking on our downtown streets. That will work to ease congestion and improve mobility.*



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- Do you support enhanced investment in transportation infrastructure, including that for pedestrians, bicycles, and scooters?

*Yes, the city certainly needs to increase its investment in transportation infrastructure -- and to fully implement its Complete Streets Ordinance and make a genuine effort to make our streets more inclusive and more welcoming to newer forms of transportation. That includes dedicated bus lanes, studying transitway corridors (like the very successful recent conversion of NYC's 14th Street into a transitway), and more distinct and protected bike lanes. As previously stated, 30% of Baltimore City residents do not have access to a car and we need transportation infrastructure that is reflective of that and offers people a safe, efficient, and accessible means of moving throughout the city and connecting to other regional economic centers. While we have seen some progress in parts of the city, we need a comprehensive and transparent strategy that serves all of our communities and includes partnerships with transit experts, advocates, community members, government agencies, and business leaders. Cross-sector and interagency partnerships around transportation infrastructure will help us secure the private, state and federal funding necessary for this work.*

- What is your position on the creation of a regional transit authority to oversee the transit network?

*I am in favor of the creation of a Baltimore Regional Transportation Authority (BRTA). Our current transit system is inadequate and struggles to connect people to centers of economic activity and employment. The WMATA has been a huge asset to the Washington Metropolitan area, and a BRTA could have a similar impact on our city and the greater Baltimore region. This kind of authority would help us integrate the many fragmented pieces of our region's transit system (buses, light rail, Metro Subway, MARC) and make new investments in improved public transit. It's outrageous that we currently have no major transit improvement projects underway in the Baltimore area and our existing system is in need of basic maintenance. A regional transit authority could help identify such projects and push to find the state and federal funding needed to make them happen and ensure new projects are equitable by serving areas most disconnected from transit. An interconnected, safe, and efficient regional system is essential to improving the lives and opportunities for our city's residents and attract new residents and businesses to the area. It is time for Baltimore to join other cities in making this a top priority.*